

On June 17th, I join fathers, grandfathers, and even great-grandfathers like myself, across our state in celebrating Father's Day. This Father's Day it is especially appropriate to recognize those fathers who have sacrificed precious time away from their families on active duty in our nation's military, while thanking all fathers for their commitment to their families and for playing a vital role in the lives of their children. One of the ways we can honor our nation's proud fathers is to support men's health initiatives and promote policies that help our fathers, grandfathers, brothers, sons, spouses, and friends lead long, healthy, and happy lives. This past week was observed as National Men's Health Week for the purpose of heightening the awareness of preventable health problems and encouraging early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys.

A look at the facts proves that such awareness campaigns are necessary. Consider that men are 100 percent less likely than women to go to the doctor for annual examinations and preventive care. Each of the ten leading causes of death, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, affect men at a higher rate than women. Heart disease, a leading cause of death among all groups, kills men at a rate of almost twice that of women.

These facts all add up to a devastating reality - men continue to live an average of five years less than women, and African-American men have the lowest life expectancy of any group.

To be sure, the life expectancy gap between men and women has closed slightly over the last twenty years, in part due to increased awareness of men's health issues and a more proactive management of health concerns by men and their loved ones. Still, the statistics show that men are running a health deficit and have a long way to go to improve their health, longevity, and quality of life.

As we consider changes to our nation's health care policy, and as advances in medical technology and research are made, we must work to address the vast disparity between men and women and ensure that men are receiving the medical information and treatment necessary to proactively manage their health.

One of the primary explanations for the health gap between men and

women is that we don't take care of ourselves as well as women do. In general, men are more likely to engage in unhealthy behavior, we are less likely to adopt preventative health measures, and - when we are older - tend to exercise less than women.

The steps men can take to improve the quality and length of their lives include: eating a varied low-fat diet; drinking at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day; limiting alcohol to two drinks per day; exercising for 20 minutes at least three days a week; maintaining a healthy weight;

abstaining from smoking; knowing your family history; scheduling regular check-ups, and; seeking medical treatment when necessary.

Additionally, we must recognize the unique challenge posed by prostate cancer. This ruthless killer has reached epidemic proportions, affecting at least one in six American men, with 30,000 men dying from the disease each year.

African-American men are 60

percent more likely to contract the disease than white men, and they are twice as likely to die from it. We know that men are more likely to be cured when the disease is caught early, but too many men miss this opportunity because they do not get screened regularly.

We must increase awareness among men for the need to get tested, but we must also recognize that

many men are apprehensive about screening for prostate cancer due to the invasiveness and costliness of current testing measures. Researchers are currently developing an alternative testing method for men, utilizing the same minimally invasive and highly-effective advanced imaging technologies that are used to detect breast cancer.

As we commemorate Father's Day, I encourage all Marylanders to talk to their fathers, grandfathers, and all the men – young and old - in their lives about the health threats men face and the steps men can take to improve the length and the quality of their lives – for their sake and for the ones they love. For more information

on men's health issues, I encourage you to visit my Web site where I have assembled a list of links to helpful sites:

[www.hoyer.house.gov](http://www.hoyer.house.gov)

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